

thr@ll

Anarchist news and views from Aotearoa/NZ....#19 May/June 2001 FREE

MAY DAY 2001



IN AOTEAROA

also: what is capitalism? - anarchofruitloops - letters - and much more

may day roundup

auckland

Between two and three hundred people marched in this year's May Day celebration in Auckland. Between 15 and 20 anarchists/libertarian socialists took part, including members of the @pathy! group who had travelled north from Hamilton especially for the event.

In the week leading up to May Day, Libertarianz guru and Radio Pacific talkback therapist Lindsay "I Am The Cosmos" Perigo had been urging his disciples to disrupt the celebrations, so it was no surprise that half a dozen baby-faced Commerce students in dungarees turned up at the starting line in QE 2 Square armed with some ridiculously small signs covered in freshly felt-tipped mantras. This little group, which gave itself the unlikely name Prebble's Rebels, formed a loose sort of United Front with a single Libertarianz supporter, a tall and grave man armed with a magnificent, flowing grey beard and a pack of free membership cards.

While some of the anarchists/libertarian socialists present occupied themselves with the threat posed by the gathering of the right, others were dealing with the enemy on the left, distributing free copies of a leaflet attacking the bureaucratic misleadership of the wharfies' struggle against Carter Holt Harvey, as well as bureaucratic attempts to suppress an article written by an Auckland university worker which called for solidarity with the wharfies (see article on p.6). Along with free copies of *Thr@ll*, the leaflet was accepted happily by marchers battered by the paper-selling and recruitment drives of the usual Trot and Stalinist sects.

The march ended in Aotea Square, where Green MP Keith Locke distinguished himself from a slew of dreary orators by talking movingly about the life and recent death of his mother, children's author and longtime radical activist Elsie Locke.



Hamilton anarchists occupy Waikato University's McDonald's.

hamilton

This year's small May Day demo in Hamilton was a nice change from the SWO dominated event of last year. Organised and run by the newly-formed anarchist group from the Waikato University, this year's demo was based on the university campus itself.

The day was mainly of educational purposes. Tables were set up by several different activist and unionist groups to bring alternative education to the apathy-stricken campus. Response was generally positive, with lots of people asking for information. And there was the well spoken, but not so well read lad, who loudly proclaimed the glory of global capitalism, with quotes like: "I know that McDonald's is a greedy, multinational corporation, but the only difference between you and me is that I have no problem with that."

The main corporate target for the day was the McDonald's on campus, which provides enough controversy over its contract with the university, which allows only five other food providers on campus, none of whom are allowed to sell burgers. This limit apparently also applies to the giving out of free vegan burgers.

The climax of the day was the flash occupation of the restaurant during its busiest hour of the day, which resulted in a good picture – and a not-so-good article – in the local paper. Not a bad first effort for this newly-formed, small group.

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MAY DAY
"If you want to change the city
- you have to control the streets"

STREET PARTY!

wellington...may day uprising

Hundreds of anti-capitalist protesters managed to (temporarily) shut down six branches of multinational corporations in Wellington during the May Day Carnival Against Capitalism. Two branches of McDonald's, two Star Marts, a Kentucky Fried Chicken, and a Burger King were closed. Whilst protesters chanted anti-corporate slogans outside, police formed barricades in front of the businesses (just "doing their job" of protecting capitalist exploiters I guess). One Star Mart had already closed down "for stocktaking" before protesters arrived to picket the store.

PARTY, PANDEMONIUM, PROTEST...

The Wellington Carnival Against Capitalism consisted not only of a few shut downs but five hours of roving protest and party against various capitalist nasties throughout town. The turnout for the event was huge, much bigger than last year's impressive May Day carnival. Numbers were hard to judge, with many people coming and going throughout the day, but maybe about 700 people attended the day's events (some estimates were as high as 1,000). This was fantastic for a demo which had overtly radical aims, and for a small city which in recent times hasn't had much of a protest tradition.

The carnival had two starting points: one at the Freedom Shop (272 Cuba St) – an anarchist bookstore celebrating its sixth birthday – and the other in the Victoria University Quad. I joined the carnival at the Freedom Shop, where about 120 people kinda sedately enjoyed some free food provided by Food Not Bombs and listened to some music. We then set off down Cuba St to join up with the students from Victoria Uni in Cuba Mall. There we met up with the tail end of a May Day CTU

was a carnival against capitalism, not a carnival in support of capitalist small business. Some even claimed that in opposing Star Mart, a chain of 24-hour stores run by oil giant Caltex, we should support local dairies!! But small business is just as exploitative as big business, dairies pay just as shit wages to their wage slaves as Star Mart. Sounds a wee bit utopian maybe, but to get rid of capitalism, we need to get rid of all business (big or small), all working for an employer (and all classes that result from that relationship), all buying and selling, everything that reduces life to the commodity form, and instead have production for use rather than profit.

The Carnival ended outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade building after marching through the financial centre of the city, spontaneously shutting down a few multinationals along the way. There about 300-400 of us protested against the proposed Hong Kong Free Trade Agreement, an agreement which will benefit only a few Hong Kong and New Zealand capitalists. A puppet of Mike Moore (head goon of the WTO and former Labour PM) was burnt to the delight of the crowd. Then things got a little tense when the police arrested one protester. There was a bit of argy-bargy, and we surrounded the arrestee, demanding she be released. This was a minor victory: we stopped the police from taking her to the station but she was still charged. She was the only arrest of the day.



union rally of about 100 people who were listening to boring speeches by union bureaucrats (who care more for the safe functioning of capitalism than the workers they are supposed to represent). The contrast between the two protests was interesting: the carnival was more energetic, noisy, and colourful; the rally looked dull in comparison.

FASHION SHAME

In Cuba Mall, a sweatshop fashion parade was performed for an audience of about 300. Models paraded clothes by transnationals like Nike, Gap, Adidas etc. whilst we were informed of how these clothes are produced by super-exploited sweatshop labour in the "developing" world. Then Wellington's water was auctioned off in a mock auction outside the Bucket Fountain. This was to highlight the probable privatisation of Wellington's water supply – local politicians are trying to sneak through a plan to integrate Wellington's water supply into a trust, a first step along the road to privatisation. "How can they privatise something from the sky [ie. water]?" said one speaker.

THERE IS NO BUSINESS LIKE NO BUSINESS

The biggest crowd of the day, maybe 400 to 500, converged in Manners Mall to shut down the Manners Mall KFC and Star Mart. People were in general enjoying themselves, eating free food, listening to music...but the "Shut down Star Mart" bit of the demo puzzled me. I saw signs like "Star Mart: Small business vs big business" and a sticker "think locally, end corporate domination, shut down star mart"...hang on, I thought this

FULL TIME REPORT

On the negative side, the carnival displayed many of the inadequacies of a movement which claims to be anti-capitalist but in reality only opposes parts of capitalism. Capitalism will not end even if we shut down a few fast food joints and clothing companies. Capitalism is much more than a few garish examples of corporate consumer capitalism. We need to create a social movement which is based upon people's everyday struggles against capitalism, both in the workplace and community.

On the positive side, the carnival was fun, people partially overcoming the alienation of class society for a day and questioning some of its worst excesses. A real success of the carnival was the way it was organised. A coalition of a diverse range of groups – the Committee for the Establishment of Civilisation (CEC, a Wellington anarchist group), Aotearoa Educators, the Residents Coalition, Eco-Action (a Victoria Uni group), the Radical Society (also a Vic Uni group) and Wellington Animal Action – organised the event along the lines of the affinity group structure developed overseas in places like the Seattle riot against globalisation in 1999. The decentralised co-ordination between these groups worked remarkably well.

ronald mcdonald abducted

Mystery still surrounds the disappearance in late April of a 3.6m tall inflatable figure of Ronald McDonald from the roof of a McDonald's in Hamilton.

Ronald's absence was first noticed by McDonald's workers arriving one morning to make McMuffins, and was quickly reported to the police.

The Ronald figure, which is worth around \$10,000, had been deliber-

ately placed in a position visible from a busy set of traffic lights below, making it difficult for anyone to get near him without being seen.

News of Ronald's abduction spread fast, and organisers of May Day celebrations in Wellington demanded that he be brought to the capital on May 1 to stand trial for crimes against workers rights, the environment and animals.

"If the abductors could turn him over

to us, he will be given a trial that could leave him feeling rather deflated," said Wellington May Day organizer Ross Gardiner.

Ronald was eventually found several days later floating face-down in a Hamilton lake. He was rescued by a woman called Trish, who promptly contacted a local radio station to claim a \$500 reward the station had offered for his recovery.

Police say they still don't know who took Ronald.

christchurch

The Reverend Jeremiah Lovebucks of the International Church of the Almighty Dollar entertained a crowd of around 50 people at a "Celebrate Capitalism" day in Christchurch.

The rally was part of a campaign to reclaim May Day "from the lazy workers who are doing nothing with it". Passers by were urged to support the bosses and to "spend more to help the poor."

Unfortunately for the Reverend, the good people of Christchurch didn't swallow his line that buying luxury goods helps the poor and that "leaving it to the bosses" is the best way to solve industrial disputes, and sent him packing with a pie in the face! They then urged people to go to a meeting to find out about the real history of May Day and learn what's

happening around the world on May 1. Everyone then enjoyed a free meal provided by Food Not Bombs.

The May Day street theatre was organised by Christchurch's Anarchist Round Table (ART), which was reformed late last year after an extended period of hibernation. ART is now holding regular public meetings on the first Thursday of each month. The first two meetings have been well attended and attracted thought-provoking debate. ART can be contacted c/o PO Box 22-076, Christchurch, or by email at: anarchistroundtable@anarchist.com.

dunedin

Dunedin's May Day activities began with a handful of trade unionists standing along Dunedin's motorways sporting "I'm union" placards in the early morning drizzle.

Later, about 30 folk gathered outside McDonald's on George Street chanting anti-capitalist slogans, before moving on to Starbucks and DEKA.

At lunchtime, community radio carried a one-hour show about May Day. A few folk then leafleted Speights after they had the audacity to claim May Day as "Foundation Day".

The Wobblies rounded off the day with a free evening of live music and food that attracted a crowd of about 50 people.

may day around the world

Here are just a few of the events that took place around the world on May Day 2001...

CZECH REPUBLIC

More than 200 Czech anarchists demonstrated in Prague, handing out leaflets and food.

COLOMBIA

Several thousand turned out for the May Day march in Medellin, including an anarchist bloc chanting "Against the state and the bosses!" and "Anarchy and revolution!"..

AUSTRALIA

Actions took place in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, where thousands attempted to blockade the country's stock exchanges.

GERMANY

Protesters in Berlin got one up on the cops by starting protests in the early hours. Barricades were erected, and



running battles fought. Anger was increased by the banning of the annual demo, while a march by the far-right NPD was allowed and then protected by cops.

NETHERLANDS

May Day celebrations in Amsterdam were marked by clashes between demonstrators and police.

ZIMBABWE

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions rally was invaded by Mugabe's War Veteran henchmen under police protection. Lucky for them, as the thousands of workers threatened to explain to the "veterans" in no uncertain terms exactly what they thought of them. Union leaders ended the rally early to avoid confrontation (as they do!).

MOZAMBIQUE

Thousands of workers marched through Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, in protest at mass redundancies. Workers in the important cashew nut industry held banners saying "Down with the bureaucrats of Washington and Maputo".

SOUTH KOREA

20,000 workers turned out in the South Korean capital Seoul to protest against economic restructuring and police attacks against striking Daewoo workers. Several hundred broke through cop lines.

POLAND

In Warsaw, 1,500 people joined one of the largest anarchist demonstrations in years called by, among others, the Polish Anarchist Federation.

ENGLAND

Thousands of demonstrators in London were corralled into intersections and detained by police for several hours.

Source: AF

what is capitalism?

The following is from a leaflet produced by the Libertarian Communists for the Wellington May Day "Carnival Against Capitalism". It is intended to be a brief introductory polemic to capitalism and its negation: communism.

WHAT IS CAPITALISM?

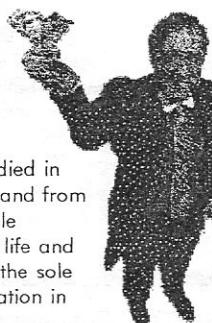
Today is May Day, a global day of protest against capitalism. But just what is capitalism? Let's take a closer look...

Capitalism is a disgusting social system. Countless hundreds of millions of people have died in the last 100 years because of capitalism's wars, and from the starvation, poverty, pollution and preventable disease capitalism produces. This toll of human life and misery and ecological destruction have all had the sole purpose of keeping a tiny minority of the population in power, wealth and privilege.

This privileged capitalist elite own and control most of the resources in society – the land, factories, offices, and so on. This is the main basis of their power. Because this tiny elite, the boss class, own most of the resources in society, they force us to work for them. So capitalism is fundamentally based upon exploitation, our exploitation.

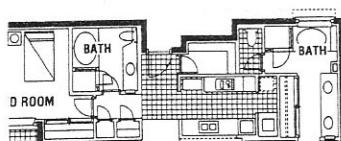
BOSSES ARE PARASITES

We work for them, and they profit. They profit from our labour, from our blood, sweat, toil and creativity. We actually create the wealth of the world. Through our collective efforts, through our labour, we have built and created the machines, computers, buildings and so on. Yet the bosses claim that they own the things we produce! Bosses are parasites, thieves and robbers. Bosses need us, but we don't need them.



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*表示価格は1US\$=125円にて換算しております。(期間・フロアによって異なります)



WORK IS WAGE SLAVERY

Bosses must seek to constantly increase their profits all the time. If they don't make a profit, their "enterprise" will eventually go under. They increase their profits by making us work longer, harder and faster for less pay and in worse conditions.

Work is a dreary daily drill of slavery, supervision, and submission to bosses and their managers. We have no say in the running of our factory or office. They make us perform dull and repetitive tasks. They monitor us inside our workplace like we are criminals. They make us work faster and harder through discipline, or offering us lollies like incentives and promotions up the ladder. Let's face it: under capitalism, work is a form of slavery, wage slavery.

RESISTANCE IS FERTILE

Because work under capitalism is enforced drudgery, we are compelled to resist it every day. We phone in sick, we go-slow on the job, we take breaks, we occasionally throw a spanner in the works. Sometimes our resistance becomes more open and visible, through strikes, demonstrations and occupations.

R - R - REVOLUTION ! !

Capitalism is not inevitable. Resistance to capitalism happens

every day. When this resistance becomes more unified and organised, then revolution becomes possible. There have been many anti-capitalist revolutions in the last 100 years: in Russia 1917, Germany 1918-23, Italy 1919, Spain 1936, Hungary 1956, France 1968, and Portugal 1974-75. These revolutions were created by millions of ordinary people who refused capitalism's relentless imposition of work, money, private property and social classes. In these revolutions people went out and created their own community and workplace councils, which were run by participatory democracy.

COMMUNISM, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT . . .

The revolutions above show us that a society where the wealth of the world is held in common by all is possible. They show us that workers themselves can run their own workplaces democratically, without the need for managers or bosses. They show us that we can create our own democratic institutions which will decide what is to be produced, and distribute things according to individual needs. They show us that a world where everything is owned by everyone for the benefit of everyone is possible.

Sounds like communism, right? And communism will never work, just like in Russia or China, right? "Communism" was never established in Russia or China. Russia and China were totalitarian states where a corrupt set of "Communist" Party bosses forced people to work for them, not much different from the private capitalism of today. Real communism can and does work. Even in this capitalist society, beaches, museums, public libraries, parks, roads, bridges, and water supply are free for anybody to use according to their needs. Imagine if everything was for free!

DUMP ALL BOSSSES !

As Libertarian Communists, we want to dump all bosses, bureaucrats, and politicians (party representatives who claim to act on our behalf but end up us selling us out). Real communism exists when there are no classes or state, when there is genuine liberty and equality for all. We are for a free communism which is voluntary, self-regulated, and not imposed by state decrees. Freedom without communism is privilege and injustice, communism without freedom is slavery and brutality.

Whilst continuing to promise prosperity for all, the present phase of capitalism is creating more victims and more environmental havoc than ever before. Many of us are forced to work more than 40 hours a week for less pay in real terms. Wealth and power are concentrated in fewer hands than they ever have been. In the last 30 years the rich have doubled their capital while poverty and misery grow. The poorest 20% possesses less than 4% of world resources whereas the richest control over 85%. The complex life of this planet, which is the source of sustenance and cultural diversity for all men and women, is increasingly transformed into a merchandise, mercilessly exploited, privatised, patented and irreversibly transformed.

Under capitalism, they have stolen away control of our lives. Let's steal them back!

"Capitalism is the greatest crime of all. It devours more lives in a single day than all the murderers put together."

- Alexander Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?*

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waterfront dispute continues

Protests on South Island waterfronts look set to continue, despite a High Court injunction banning "unlawful activities" by members of the Waterfront Workers' Union (WWU).

Forestry giant Carter Holt Harvey (CCH) and scab union Mainland Stevedoring took out the injunction after mediation talks between CCH and the WWU collapsed in late April.

The Nelson branch of the WWU initially announced it would suspend its pickets and seek "dialogue" with CCH, but a later announcement by the union's national body hinted that "lawful" protests would continue.

Meanwhile, activists in Dunedin and Bluff have been discussing with local WWU representatives how to respond to future attempts by CCH to load ships in the area. In an effort to get around the injunction, future pickets may involve sit down protests by family members and activists who are not members of the WWU. A ship is scheduled to begin loading logs for CCH at Bluff in early June.

Wharfies have been picketing South Island docks since late last year in protest at CCH's attempt to casualise the waterfront workforce. Police in Nelson, Port Chalmers and Bluff have used force to escort workers from Tauranga-based Mainland Stevedoring onto the wharves to load ships for CCH, resulting in scuffles and several arrests.

eld

School show off

A BILL Gates forum today for 4000 secondary school children has been cancelled.

Microsoft and the State Government this morning decided to put off the event because of security concerns.

The forum, which was to include schoolchildren from across the state, was due to be held this afternoon at the Exhibition Centre across the road from the casino.

It is expected Mr Gates will now use the Internet to deliver the same message — encouraging young people to seek careers in



Cancelled: Bill Gates information technology. Mr Gates, the Microsoft chief, was a key speaker at the World Economic Forum this morning. Yesterday he appealed to protesters to back off from the forum meeting.

fore police could rescue him.

"The instructions to anybody attending the World Economic Forum was that there were certain methods in how they were to get to the forum, and going in

new website fights university gag order

A new website and e-mailing list have been set up to allow workers at Auckland University and members and supporters of AUS, the union representing general and academic staff at Auckland University, to share information and discuss developments in their union and workplace.

The website is the product of a prolonged controversy which was prompted by the efforts of the president of AUS Auckland, Lane West-Newman, to suppress a pair of articles written for the union's bulletin by rank and file union members. One of these articles criticised vice chancellor John Hood's use of slush funds to finance favoured parts of the university, and the other, by *Thr@ll* reader and distributor Kirsty McCully, noted parallels

between casualisation on the South Island waterfront and casualisation at Auckland University, and called for solidarity with the wharfies.

Although AUS's Editorial Board supported the publication of the articles, Lane West-Newman vehemently opposed their publication because this would "antagonise" John Hood.

The story of the struggle which ensued over the articles is a continuing one, but a good deal of it is covered in the introduction which the censored article "The Casual Attitude" was given when it was distributed as a leaflet at Auckland's May Day march.

The new website is at: <http://www.geocities.com/aucklandunistaff/>

a letter...

EMINEM AND THE PROLEPHOBES

Dear *Thr@ll*,

I thought the article "Eminem and prolephobia" in *Thr@ll* 17 missed the point. So what if a few middle class liberals show their authoritarian prolephobia in calling for state censorship of Eminem? I think the key point about Eminem is that he is not a threat to capitalism, but is a plastic, pre-fabricated product of capitalism, and a disturbing one at that. His "rebel" image and controversial attitudes are a carefully marketed campaign by a record company to make a huge profit. Capitalism is not threatened by a gay bashing and woman-hating rap star who makes money for them. Eminem is an excellent example of capitalism co-opting alienated white, male working class youth, and channelling the anger of this alienated group into scapegoating minorities.

The Mugwump

...and a reply

Dear Mugwump

I never claimed that Eminem was in any way an anti-capitalist spokesman; nor, for that matter, did I claim he was a pro-capitalist spokesman.

I should also stress that I don't oppose leftists going to Eminem's concerts to protest: I only oppose those leftists who join forces with the political establishment and the far right by calling for the apparatus of the state to be used to prevent people from hearing Eminem's music.

What I was really interested in doing, in "Eminem and the Prolephobes", was using Eminem as a sort of lens through which to view the attitudes of a particular part of society — the "liberal" middle class, which expresses itself politically these days in organisations like the Labour Party — toward younger members of what are euphemistically referred to as "the lower socio-economic groups". Why, I wondered before writing the article, has Eminem been singled out for condemnation by the middle class pressure groups and politicians? After all, many other artists have dealt with the same subject matter as Eminem. In the field of music alone, Nick Cave, Johnny Cash, Jimi Hendrix, Elvis Costello and the fabulous Mississippi John Hurt have all sung about males killing their girlfriends or wives.

In my view, Eminem is singled out for suppression simply because his fan base consists primarily of a group of people — alienated, frequently rebellious working class "youths" — who are hated and feared by a part of the political establishment which traditionally has been entrusted with controlling them, but which is unable today to employ some of its more subtle methods of control. My article needn't have picked on Eminem to make this point — it could have discussed the campaign against so-called "yob" culture in Britain, or the hysteria about "schoolyard violence" that has gripped America for years now, destroying the lives of countless teens whose alienation and hostility to authority saw them falsely cast as would-be Columbine killers, or the anti-drugs, anti-dance scene hullabaloo whipped up lately in New Zealand by alcoholic newspaper editors.

In my view, then, "Eminem and the Prolephobes" stands or falls on the strength of its attempts to link the social phenomenon of attempts to suppress Eminem with wider developments in capitalism and its constituent classes. The fact that Eminem is not a propagandist for anticapitalism is neither here nor there.

If you have any response you want to make to this response, send me an e-mail: s_h_hamilton@yahoo.com
Cheers
Scott

rediscovering the socialism in anarchism

Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left, Interviews and Essays 1993-1998, by Murray Bookchin.

AK Press, Edinburgh and San Francisco, 1999.

Reviewed by Fydd

All too often class-struggle anarchist literature is out of date. The bulk of it was written over 50 years ago. Classics like Peter Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* (1892) and Alexander Berkman's *What is Communist Anarchism?* (1928) are good expositions of libertarian communism, but often seem quaint and irrelevant to the conditions of today. Thankfully, Bookchin's *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left* may be the first leftist anarchist book which presents a reasonably coherent and revolutionary anti-capitalist vision which is relevant to the here and now for many, many years.

CAPITALISM TRIUMPHANT, SOCIALISM SUBVERSIVE

In an important, well argued and easy to read book, Bookchin forcefully notes the obvious: we have seen the triumph of capital since the 1980s; this has resulted in increasing working hours, decreasing pay packets, increasing alienation, mass unemployment and poverty, increasing misery, and the brink of an ecological crisis. This makes a revolutionary anti-capitalist politics all the more relevant and urgent. Bookchin notes that only through a libertarian communist revolution can we get rid of capitalism and the misery it produces. Such a revolution does not involve replacing the capitalists with a new set of bosses as in the USSR or China. It does involve the complete destruction of the class system and the state, and its replacement by a decentralised federation of ultra-democratic workers' councils and neighbourhood councils.

Yet in a time when capitalism is encroaching upon almost every aspect of life, Bookchin ironically claims that the left today has little understanding of capitalism. This can be seen in the current "anti-capitalist" movement, which often confuses the ideology of the free market with capitalism as a whole. To Bookchin, who has been involved in revolutionary leftist politics since the 1930s, the tradition of revolutionary socialism seems lost. The book is somewhat of a semi-biography, with Bookchin interviewed about his experiences as a radical since the 1930s (in the 1930s he was a Stalinist, then a Trotskyist, before moving to anarchism in the 1950s). In comparison to the left of the 1930s, Bookchin looks with dismay at the current left, and notes that many leftists don't even understand what capitalism is, how it operates and how to get rid of it.

Bookchin essentially argues we need to rediscover socialism, that is, libertarian socialism. Anarchists need to also rediscover the socialism in anarchism. Many of the basic concepts of the leftist anarchist tradition have been lost. For example, many anarchists now view anarchism as a form of liberalism rather than socialism and completely distrust any talk of class. Thus means, as Bookchin notes, anarchism is losing its traditional left-wing core, and thus is fast becoming an unthreatening version of liberalism with a bourgeois emphasis on the freedom of the individual, on personal autonomy (a notion that suits capitalists just fine). "Anti-statism isn't



enough. Many reactionaries and even corporate bandits are against state intervention too. In my view, unless socialism is an integral part of anarchism, then anarchism becomes self-indulgence. Anarchists who aren't socialists might as well just call themselves individualists." (p. 125). So Bookchin claims what is sorely needed is a serious, coherent, organised, revolutionary anarchist left which is well-versed in anarchist socialist theory.

THE COMMUNE OF COMMUNES GONE WRONG...

The book is not perfect. It's often coloured by unnecessary personal grudges, especially the article "Whither anarchism?". It would have been far more interesting if Bookchin were interviewed by (say) a critical left-wing revolutionary anarchist rather than a sympathetic interviewer. But the major weaknesses of Bookchin are his belief in "libertarian

municipalism" and his vanguardism.

Bookchin's libertarian municipalism is a fundamental misinterpretation of the communal dimension of anarchist communism. Anarchist communists claim that the new society would be composed of a "commune of communes". This doesn't mean middle-class hippies experiencing temporary adventures in poverty, but a network of self-governing communities. Local neighbourhoods and their services would be run by democratically elected neighbourhood councils (whilst workplaces would be run by the workers themselves through workers' councils). These councils would have open meetings which anybody could attend, regular elections which would elect temporary delegates who could be recalled at any instant. These neighbourhood councils have, along with workers' councils, been a feature of all working class revolutions over the last century.

Bookchin has twisted this revolutionary approach by forming a reformist, leftist party with a green tinge for local body elections. His libertarian municipalism is not anarchist because it involves people surrendering control over their lives to a bunch of representatives, rather trying to establish direct democracy. Bookchin is not consistent in his opposition to the state: local government is part of the state. If Bookchin's leftist green party got into power at local government level, no matter how well intentioned, it would sell-out its supporters just as the German Greens have. Why doesn't Bookchin apply his criticisms of the dismal failure of national Green Parties around the world to establish "non-party parties" to his own local body Green Party?



VANGUARDISM

Bookchin also claims we need an organised vanguard to lead a revolution. This is a very touchy issue. Bookchin claims such an organisation, if it avoids the Leninist central-

ised model of leadership and retains its internal democracy, will not develop into an institutionalised minority in power after the revolution. This argument is unconvincing. Any leadership, anarchist included, is in a position of power, and power corrupts, as we saw with the leadership of the FAI and CNT in revolutionary Spain in 1936. Whilst a revolution does need a balance between spontaneity and organisation, instinct and reason, it doesn't need a vanguard imposing its vision from above on the masses.

Despite its support for vanguardism and a reformist local body party, *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left* is important because it points out the obvious: that what is relevant now is leftist anarchism. And it's about time someone pointed this out. The book is well worth reading by anyone interested in the future of the left and leftist anarchism.

the latest anarcho-fruitloops

Anarcho-primitivism is a theory that has gained a small following amongst some North American and British anarchists. New Zealanders are probably familiar with the concept – opposition to technology, a return to a hunter-gatherer society, ending the division of labour – all the sorts of things the McGillicuddy Serious Party promoted as a joke, except that anarcho-primitivists take the same idea a lot further, and they aren't joking.

HAPPY HUNTING

Represented in the US by John Zerzan and zines such as *Anarchy - A Journal of Desire Armed* and *Fifth Estate*, and in the UK by *Green Anarchist* magazine, anarcho-primitivism sees society as having gone wrong with the invention of agriculture. Prior to this we were all happy anarchist hunter-gatherers, leading a life "of leisure, intimacy with nature, sensual wisdom, sexual equality and health," according to Zerzan.

Supposedly, agriculture and technology were not just undeveloped, but actively resisted. Zerzan thinks we were mostly vegetarian and had no specialised workers. The latter, division of labour, seems to be a particular hang-up of primitivists – heaven forbid that we should have to depend on others to produce something. Forget co-operation, let us all be sturdy, self-reliant individuals.

Technology requires specialists, which seems to be equated with fully developed industrial capitalism. Make a case for even a basic form of technology and anarcho-primitivists accuse you of supporting wage-slavery, massive factories and the destruction of the environment.

According to Zerzan a few other evils didn't exist in his pre-historic golden age: "It also seems clear that reified time, language... number and art had no place, despite an intelligence fully capable of them." Fantastic.

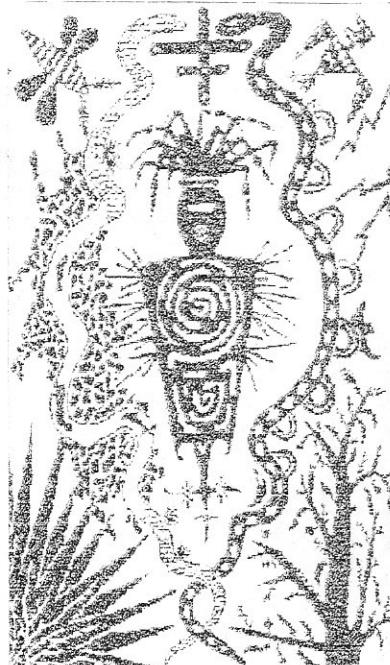
In case you're wondering, Zerzan thinks language reduces communication and inhibits "the flood of images and sensations to which the pre-modern individual was open".

There isn't much point trying to refute this vision of history. Our real knowledge of life in the pre-Palaeolithic era is minimal. We are trying to build a picture based on a few fragments of bone and stone. Those of us who aren't blessed with Zerzan's second sight would admit that trying to build a picture of life at the time is a matter of making educated guesses and tossing in a bit of

wild speculation. A fun game for archaeologists and *New Scientist* writers, but not of much value for people trying to construct a serious political programme.

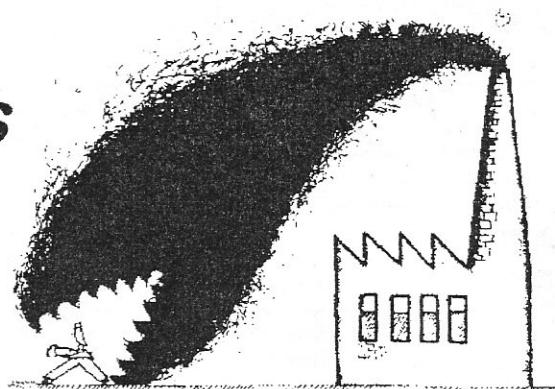
WACKY EXTRAPOLATIONS

I can't resist mentioning one of Zerzan's wackier extrapolations in his search for evidence of the existence of a co-operative, sexually equal, pre-historic society – the disappearance of large canine teeth in males. Apparently, this shows that females exercised a choice for sociable, sharing males! (Small canine teeth are a sign of being sociable and sharing, it seems.)



This model from the past is also the shape of our future, although how we are going to get there is hard to say. Large-scale organisation, and most other forms of struggle are rejected.

When asked at a meeting in London what we should do to bring about an anarcho-primitivist society, Zerzan's only suggestion was to launch physical attacks on the products of industry. In particular, digging up roads was suggested. Not necessarily a bad idea at times, but how is this going to bring about a global social revolution? A vague idea of inevitability is involved – sooner or later small groups of people will spontaneously break free of their conditioning, break up the roads and buildings and gather the vegetables spontaneously



sprouting on the ruins. When they realise the delights of freedom and the natural abundance of nature there'll be no turning them back.

But if everything is going to happen spontaneously what is the use of anarcho-primitivist movements or theories? I checked with Paul Rodgers, a *Green Anarchist* writer and was told its main purpose was to discredit other theories (that I guess might get in the way of all this spontaneity).

DAFT OR DESTRUCTIVE?

By now, some readers are probably asking: "Who gives a toss? Anarchism has always attracted the odd bunch of Whammo Deluxe Mince Pies, nobody much is going to take up such an obviously unachievable cause, so, so what?"

Well, if I were to make it my business to discredit anarchism, I wouldn't launch my attack from the outside. Instead, under the guise of promoting it, I would present a ludicrous, unworkable and unattractive version of anarchism that is just credible enough to be considered seriously held views. I would reject organisation and encourage illegal actions to the exclusion of other forms of activism. And I'd be as vocal as possible, hoping to get the media to peddle my views as representative of anarchists.

I certainly don't mean to suggest anarcho-primitivists have in fact set out with the intention of discrediting anarchism – I think they are daft rather than destructive. But however good their intentions they are the last thing an already marginalised group needs.

The only value I can see in anarcho-primitivism is as a sort of "thought experiment". Its model of society represents a sort of anarchist fundamentalism with which we can compare other possibilities and think through the consequences of technological and social development. Otherwise, the theory is both useless and potentially damaging.

- Sam Buchanan

Note: All John Zerzan quotes are from his *Future Primitive* pamphlet, in an edition published by Dead Trees Earth First, Brighton, UK, no date given.